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Senate approves heritage area bill

Sunday, July 31, 2005

By **TOM HESTER JR.**
Staff Writer

A bill that would designate a swath of New Jersey, including the Trenton region, as The Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area has received U.S. Senate approval, but waits for House consideration.

The bill has been approved by the Senate before, but never by the House.

U.S. Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, R-Harding, a sponsor of the House bill, said he's "hopeful that the House will consider this legislation in the near future."

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House Republicans have been hesitant to support the bill, citing concerns about property rights and federal encroachment. Sponsors contend the bill will have no effect on private property.

But U.S. Rep. Rush Holt, D-Hopewell Township, another bill sponsor, said he

also hoped the House would act.

The national heritage area would unite about 300 sites in the state under a single designation and provide \$10 million to assist in preservation, cultural and tourism efforts.

Among the sites touted as part of the proposed area are the Old Barracks Museum, Washington's Crossing State Park and the Princeton Battlefield.

The bill was approved by the Senate on Thursday by unanimous consent.

U.S. Sens. Jon Corzine and Frank Lautenberg, both D-N.J., praised the legislation as a means to educate residents about an important chapter in the nation's history.

"Many from New Jersey played a vital role in the struggle to create a nation governed by its citizens, not by colonial rule," Lautenberg said. "It is important that we recognize and celebrate those efforts and establish the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area in New Jersey."

Corzine said the designation would be a "tribute to patriots who fought and died in New Jersey to establish a country that values freedom and individual rights."

NOTE: Contact State House bureau chief Tom Hester Jr. at thester@njtimes.com or (609) 777-4464.

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